

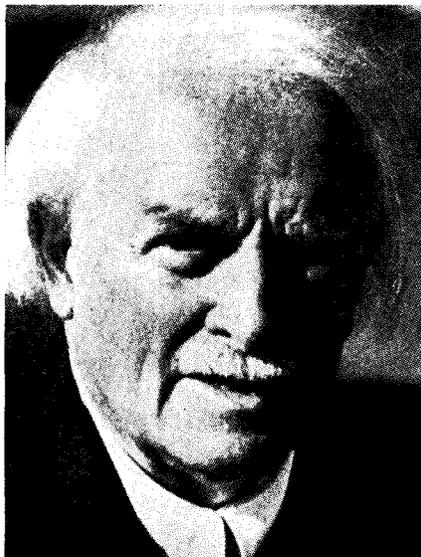
Wonderful Wizard of Wales

"My Father, Lloyd George," by **Richard Lloyd George** (Crown, 240 pp. \$4), discloses in intimate detail the unorthodox private life of the great statesman from Wales. John Clive teaches modern English history at the University of Chicago.

By John Clive

THIS is a strange and sad book. The subject? One of the great British statesmen of this century, the Welsh wizard who played a role analogous to Churchill's in an earlier world war, infusing government and country with energy and the will to victory. The author: Lloyd George's eldest son. One's first thought might well be that here is a belated act of filial piety, nostalgic reminiscences by a devoted son of his father's colorful and heroic exploits and personality. And, indeed, this is certainly one of the threads running through the book: Lloyd George reading "King Lear" by flashes of lightning; Lloyd George producing Biblical quotations "like a squid squirting ink"; Lloyd George galvanizing munitions manufacturers into effective action during World War I; Lloyd George on the golf course, in his orchard, breakfasting with the great at Ten Downing Street, and so forth. All very pleasant and entertaining—but little that is really new and no memorably fresh views of the great figures with whom Lloyd George shared the stage of history. Moreover, the author himself informs us with disarming candor that his facts may be wrong, his places and dates confused.

What, then, was the point of writing the book? "I have tried," the author writes, "to concern myself with truth, with the essence of things, and with those strange, wayward and subtle meanings behind facts." That truth, that essence of things, turns out to be that the author's father was a born and incorrigible philanderer: "He had only one form of recreation, which he followed all the years of his adult life." And the book is largely concerned with the documentation of this statement: from the hushed-up scandal of the child he fathered on a charming widow in Caernarvon while his own wife was expecting her second baby (this would almost certainly have cost him his first



—From the book.

Lloyd George — "He had only one form of recreation."

election to Parliament, had it become known); to the affairs with the "very stylish, perhaps a little flamboyant"

Welsh draper's wife in London and with "Dolores" in Buenos Aires; on to other affairs and other extramarital children until we reach the years of his premature retirement when he surrounded himself with a seraglio of female retainers, including a Hollywood actress who kept making expensive telephone calls to the United States. Lloyd George's wife, in many ways the real heroine of this book, finally left him, having borne with him patiently for many years. And when her gentleness and endurance came to an end, the family broke up as well.

It is really a pathetic story; and one which, making due allowance for the author's justified bitterness and less justified archness of tone, has the ring of truth. Future historians and biographers will have to take account of the revelation of this dimension of Lloyd George's personality, will have to use it in their estimate of the character and achievements of the man whom Lord Keynes described as "this goat-footed bard, this half-human visitor to our age from the hag-ridden magic and enchanted woods of Celtic antiquity." The author may well be right when he calls Lloyd George "probably the greatest natural Don Juan in the history of British politics." Nonetheless, one cannot help being somewhat taken aback at finding a septuagenarian son cast in the role of Leporello.

Commentary on the Commentator

"Don't Let Them Scare You: The Life and Times of Elmer Davis," by **Roger Burlingame** (Lippincott, 341 pp. \$5.95), commemorates a great reporter whose perceptive comments gave meaning to the news. Veteran Washington correspondent Ernest K. Lindley claims two things in common with Davis: birth in Indiana and a Rhodes scholarship.

By Ernest K. Lindley

AS ONE of the most civilized and civilizing publicists of our time, Elmer Davis deserves to be perpetuated, with all of his sanity, salt, and courage. His legions of admirers, who must include almost every subscriber to the *Saturday Review*, will rejoice in this biography. Roger Burlingame gives us the flesh and blood as well as the spirit of Davis probably as well as could be done in the printed word.

Davis should live through his own inimitable words. But those were scattered among hundreds of articles, essays, reviews, broadcasts, and letters (plus novels and short stories). Most were topical. Mr. Burlingame has placed a judicious selection of Davis's observations against the background that makes them meaningful. Happily, these include quotations from Godfrey G. Gloom, the most delightful political diagnostician since Mr. Dooley, as well as from Davis's writings for *Harper's*, the *Saturday Review*, and other magazines in the Twenties and Thirties, the broadcasts starting in September 1939, which broadened his influence, his postwar editorial broadcasts, and the two slender volumes which were his powerful final testaments: "But We Were Born Free" and "Two Minutes Till Midnight." The author has also dug into Davis's life, with the help of family, friends, and professional associates, and come up with interesting facts that are new to this reviewer, and probably

to many others who knew Davis at least moderately well. He explains most of what needs to be explained about Davis, except the most important thing, which can never be fully explained about any unusual man—how he came to think and act as he did.

Appropriately, the little town on the Indiana bank of the Ohio River, where Davis was born in 1890, was named Aurora (light of morning). As a boy he was “ungainly.” He loved sports—perhaps all the more because physical ineptitude limited his participation. He felt further handicapped because he could not sing. Both his seriousness about his studies and his provocative humor tended to set him a little apart from his schoolmates. He rebelled against hard-shelled religion. His father wrote to him at Franklin College, in central Indiana, chiding him for his expressed “contempt” for prayer and for listening to the “idiotic sayings” of agnostic professors.

Elmer majored in the classics and was graduated *magna cum laude*. In 1910 he went on to Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. There he continued his classical studies and passed the examination for the Honour School of Litterae Humaniores. Mr. Burlingame was evidently surprised that Elmer won a Second, not a First. In explanation, he quotes Elmer’s Oxford tutor: Elmer took the final examinations after only two years, instead of the usual two and a half or three, and, even so, “all but obtained a First Class.” Mr. Burlingame might have noted also that among Elmer’s American classmates who did no better were Christopher Morley and John Crowe Ransome.

Doubtless Davis’s intensive classical education, perhaps especially his mastery of Greek, contributed much to his clarity of thought and style. One might have expected him to teach, as so many Rhodes Scholars have done. His mother urged him to. But his temperament steered him elsewhere. After a brief \$10-a-week stint on *Adventure*, he landed a job as a reporter on the *New York Times*. One of his best early assignments was the Ford “Peace Ship.” His unsigned dispatches were deadpan, but some of his oral comments got under the skin of the peace-seekers, and he rejoiced in being dubbed “The Snake.” In due course, he became an editorial writer. Meanwhile, he had produced (in 1915) his first novel, and his short stories and articles were appearing in various magazines. In 1923 he cut loose from the *Times*. For nearly sixteen years he wrote prolifically—novels, short stories, articles, reviews—but without much financial success.

The next stage of his career began with the outbreak of war in 1939. CBS

called on him to report and comment from New York; their No. 1 commentators of that time, H. V. Kaltenborn, was broadcasting from Europe. He clicked immediately. Within a short time his five-minute evening spot on the CBS network was a near-must for most intelligent Americans. His salary was \$53,000 a year.

In May 1942 Davis was drafted by President Roosevelt to direct the Office of War Information. The next three-and-a-half years were stormy and difficult in every way. He had trouble with other agencies that wanted to control their own information; with the conservatives of both parties who didn’t understand propaganda and hated Roosevelt; with the Overseas Branch of OWI, under Robert E. Sherwood, the eminent playwright and Presidential ghost writer; and with some of OWI’s best writers, including Henry Pringle and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. On the whole, these tribulations are, to the best of my knowledge, reported fairly by the author. However, I would not

be so sure as he seems to be, and Davis seems to have been, that Overseas Branch of OWI was utterly free of Communist, or at least fellow-traveler, influence.

Those war-year experiences made Davis more of an advocate and a fighter. His postwar broadcasts—over ABC, which gave him free rein—were sometimes scathing. He assailed what he regarded as the excesses of various committees investigating Communist infiltration. The “Twenty Years of Treason” theme, of course, angered him to the core. He attacked McCarthy from the first and never let up. These last few years of his life were, as the author says, “the peak of his life’s achievement.”

In one of his last addresses, at Vassar, he quoted Tacitus: “Rare is the felicity of the times when you can think what you like and say what you think.” Paraphrasing, one might say of Elmer Davis: “Rare is the felicity of the man who can think clearly and courageously and says what he thinks.”

He Swung Louisiana Purchase

“Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York, 1746-1813,” by George Dangerfield (*Harcourt, Brace*. 438 pp. \$10), introduces a remarkable man whose achievements failed to bring him the posthumous fame that he sought. *Daniel J. Boorstin is the author of “Americans: The Colonial Experience.”*

By Daniel J. Boorstin

THE CULTURE of laurels, Chancellor Livingston once complained, is the most expensive husbandry. And, he might have added, the most unpredictable. Who can foretell how posterity will award the prizes? Despite the confident assertions of politicians making speeches, it is hard to predict the place of this or that man “in history.” After reading this admirable biography we may at least be tempted to say that posterity does not like to be courted.

Mr. Dangerfield has revived one of the most remarkable men of the shaping years of American history. Yet perhaps the most interesting question about Chancellor Livingston is why we have heard so little about him. Why did he fail in his bid for fame? Few Americans of his time were more energetic,

more active, more ingenious, or more versatile. Few had better luck at being on the spot for the decisive moments of history.

As a member of the Continental Congress, Livingston was appointed (June 11, 1776) to the committee of five to draft a declaration of independence. He was a member of the committee of three that drafted the New York constitution of 1777. He played the decisive role in the New York State ratifying convention that approved the new federal Constitution. As Jefferson’s minister to France (1801-1804) he was in Paris to negotiate the Louisiana Purchase. He was a collaborator of Robert Fulton in steamboat experiments, both on the Seine and on the Hudson.

But the goddess of fame never smiled on Livingston. There is no record that he had any hand in the actual drafting of the Declaration of Independence. That job fell to Jefferson, and the emending was done exclusively by John Adams and Benjamin Franklin. On July 9, 1776, when the New York Convention approved the Declaration, Livingston was en route, and so had no opportunity even to record his vote for it. On August 2, at the time of the signing, he was preoccupied with New
(Continued on page 53)